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ABSTRACT

When Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia, the education provided blacks was very different from that provided to whites. As more blacks passed through the school system it became obvious that for many young Zimbabweans the system provided education for unemployment and frustration. In 1966 African secondary schools were divided into F(1) academic and F(2) practical/vocational schools. In Zimbabwe the F(2) schools offered little promise for blacks since the schools were meant for those who were supposed to be less capable academically and offered a very limited type of training. The school system inherited by Zimbabwe when it became independent was full of contradictions, discriminatory practices, and negative attitudes and was seriously lacking in resources. For the past five years Zimbabwe has been attempting to address its social, economic, political, and cultural environments insofar as they relate to education. New comprehensive political plans are currently underway to vocationalize the country's secondary school curriculum. Efforts are being directed to make the schools the basis of national development. In Zimbabwe education is viewed as a force for social change that should play a liberating role in instilling goals of cooperative behavior patterns and stressing vocational skills and knowledge that will enable students to develop socialist ideals. To avoid the past mistake of introducing practical subjects without carefully integrating them with the country's social and economic environment, the new curriculum is designed to provide children with a knowledge of people's roles and relations with one another and with the components of their environment. (MN)

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VOCATIONALISING CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWE
"AN EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE"

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VOCATIONALISING CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWE

" AN EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE"

Prepared For Conference - 7-9 May, 1986

On

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COMPARATIVE EDUCATION (DICE)

PRESENTED BY
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ZIMBABWE.

VOCATIONALISING CURRICULUM IN ZIMBABWE

"An Evaluation Perspective"

"The success of the struggle presupposes clear objectives, neither stubborn courage nor fine slogans are enough" Frantz Fanon (1965 p.108). The quotation implies that there is no substitution to a systematic approach to curriculum design. The system of education we inherited in Zimbabwe was defective in that it was restricted in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It presented a distorted relationship between academic and vocational/ technical education. The education system was racist and contradictory in aims and implementation.

The quality of education given was aimed to develop in the white youth of the country the moral stamina to overcome the strong influence which in a mixed society like that of the then Rhodesia were constantly at work to sap the energies and weaken the moral tenacity of the private European - Tate Commission (1978). On the other hand the education provided for the blacks had different objectives. From the first ordinance passed in 1899 the aim was to direct the development of African education in a manner that would not interfer with the interests of the whites. In the demands for a certain minimum of practical subjects in the curriculum for Blacks, the settlers established their intention to utilize African cheap labour in semi-skilled and unskilled labour.

Historical Perspective of Vocational Education in School Curriculum

The white settlers and missionaries manipulated all aspects of school structure, such as enrolment discipline, organisation and curriculum to attain their economic, political and ideological objectives. The blacks were given education that would enable them to facilitate the development of capitalist modes of production in the country. In terms of the provision of education for whites a series of measures were taken to ensure that an efficient system of education was provided for the white children. As early as 1930 a compulsory education Act was introduced by which education became compulsory for all white children aged six to fifteen. The settlers' attempts to limit the availability of formal academic education for Blacks was witnessed by the fact that by 1958 there were only three government secondary schools for Africans.

2/...

The overall consideration was to ensure the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production where the relationship between employer and employee was that of master and servant or horse and rider. It was not education for national development. Priority was therefore given to issues that were regarded as of greater value to the minority group - to protect their privilleges.

As with all oppressive systems, there was an ideological and practical break between settler conceptions of the education to be provided for Africans and the latter's response to these conceptions. While the settlers pressed, although in an inconsistent and contradictory manner for a less "bookish" and more "practical" education Africans demanded more of that academic education which it was intended would be granted in only a restricted form. Kadhani and Riddell have noted one of the paradoxical consequences of these demands.

> "For decades black parents and children have been brought to realize that success in life comes through climbing higher and higher on on the educational ladder, for economic reward has been related directly to school achievement. In practice the majority of black children have failed to escape from poverty because the system has constituted an effective screening process which has allowed only a small minority to reach beyond primary school and to go on to find a relatively highly paid job."[1]

As more pupils passed through the school system it became obvious that for many young Zimbabweans the system provided education for unemployment and frustration. This became evident as the schools became the main recruiting ground for young boys and girls who left the country as freedom fighters to liberate the country. For many of them, the future held nothing. 'O' Level syllabus and examinations came from London and Cambridge. This limited the degree of relevance. The fact that the curriculum was from outside the country, it limited the control which the government wanted to have over curriculum.

3/...

In 1966 a development took place in African secondary education which further emphasised the different status of academic, and vocational/ practical courses. The secondary schools were divided into F(1) academic schools and F(2) practical/vocational schools. Each student was expected to do a minimum of two practical subjects.

The F(2) system of education is a land-mark in vocational education in Zimbabwe. It changed the students' teachers and parents' attitudes towards practical subjects. They developed negative attitudes and therefore rejected the system as inferior.

The practical subjects were meant for those who were supposed to be less capable academically. It was meant for those pupils who had got a third division or worse in their grade 7 examinations. The F(2) system was regarded as education for retarded teachers and retarded teachers.

The rejection of practical/vocational education was not only restricted to F(2) schools but was a feature of the entire colonial period, having its roots in the contradictions inherent in political economy. On this economic level there was a contradiction between the settlers' need to educate a Black labour force to a given skill level, while maintaining the subservient position of the worker and not threatening the skilled interests of the whites. 'In short, inherent in the exploitative capitalist relations of the colonial economy was a major conflict between the class aspirations of the oppressor nurtured by the contradictory education system, and the obstacles to those aspirations built up by the colonial rulers. While the reality of the colonial political economy heightened the status of academic education the call for a more limited practical/vocational education could not divert the desire for the high status education despite the frustrations involved. Mandaza (1980)

The limited nature of the practical vocational training "offered to Blacks and allied to this, the denial of full access to a formal skill training programme through the apprenticeship training system introduced in 1934, confirmed the low status of the generally prescribed training for Blacks.

4/...

Moreover, even among the whites the apprenticeship system was "very much concerned with enabling the not-so-intelligent white youth to survive in Rhodesian society. The situation was made worse by the fact that the aims of the F(2) were that boys and girls would help their peasant farmers to improve production and that this type of education would make the girls better housewives.

Ladies and gentlemen we need practical demonstration with touchable results to convince the already self-sufficient rural farmers that practical subjects are useful in rural areas. We should bear in mind that in 1985 the Zimbabwe village subsistence farmers produced cash crops which were more than those of commercial farmers.

Self Employment

One of the objectives of vocationalising curriculum is that school leavers with productive skills can become self-employed. Many of the schemes endeavouring to promote self-employment seem to work under the assumption that given the availability of productive skills and extensive support every young person can become a successful entrepreneur.

This seems to be a fallacy. To become an entrepreneur one needs to first and foremost have inclination towards business. These qualities are not unborn with most people and can rarely be instilled through vocationalising of Curriculum. This is why schemes in Kenya, Tanzania and the Uganda-Namutamba project did not succeed in stopping rural migration to urban centres despite the fact there are insufficient chances for them in formal employment sector.

Traditionally in Zimbabwe the young people are considered to be over grown children. Potentially employers tend to underate the ability of young people to handle jobs effectively. Those entering self-employment sector therefore start with poor chances of competing favourably with experienced craftsmen.

5/...

A small study I did in Harare revealed that the concept of self-employment is successful in the traditional heritage where all the young people envolved in self-employment jobs - i.e. carpentry, metal work, blacksmith, motor mechanic had been taught by a father, brother, uncle or some relative. The study revealed that most of the young people had been going through an apprenticeship scheme. The apprentice does not only learn how to make a door frame or repair a car, but also learns how to treat customers. During the apprenticeship period the young people receive food and accommodation. It also became clear that the level of education for all the two hundred self-employed people interviewed was primary education. A few 'O' level school-leavers interviewed felt that they were suitable to do better jobs.

Besides the raw skills we may give boys and girls in school they need experience, equipment and finance. However we should appreciate that most businesses require to fall back on credit to survive in this cruel economic environment. This is even more true of the small emerging business we expect young people to set up. In Zimbabwe most financial institutions will not lend money on business being set up by young people without surety nor proven business record. If school leavers are to establish themselves as self-employed entrepreneur, can they survive without being introduced to the harsh realities of financial borrowing from banks and other institutions.

After Independence

At independence, we inherited an education system which was full of contradictions. It was immorale to administer such a discriminatory system. Since Zimbabwe has chosen a socialist path of socio-economic and political development the curriculum had to reflect socialist ideas. As we have seen earlier the curricculum in Zimbabwe had the following constraints.

Lack of skilled manpower:

The system did not produce enough trained teachers to handle an integrated curriculum.

Lack of resources:

The limited resources were inequitably allocated. So there was lack of institutional infrastructure for training the needed manpower. This was made worse by the lack of equipment.

6/....

Negative attitudes:

The system produced negative attitudes towards practical subjects. Both parents students and teachers were not convinced of the value of practical subjects. Economic activities were not related to curriculum activities.

According to Karl Marx education should be concerned with those processes which contribute to the formation and changing a person's view. Marx put much emphasis on production labour at education institution as well as polytechnical education. On the same issue Mao said "Production labour must be listed as a formal course in all schools"

Education with Production

Zimbabwe's approach to vocationalising curriculum has been linked to the concept of education with production - integrating theory with practice. In this regard the Minister of Education once said: "Education can be neither exclusively academic or vocational. It has to be based on both. Every child must be exposed to both, with a view of specialising at a later stage. The other system where some children pursue only vocational training and other only academic is to be avoided. Education with production will not be an alternative to our education system, it will be central."

The hope is that the education system will produce school leavers who have a practical training a health respect for the land (and its significance, for national economy) and a serious social commitment to the society of which they are an intergral part.

Through our experience during the war, we realized that the acquisition of practical skills alone without ideology/and commitment to their value tends to produce school leavers who do not utilize the skills acquired at school. We emphasize the concept of education as a productive factor which should be used as a tool of development.

7/....

All pupils are made to appreciate "mariage of mental and manual labour, academic and technical skills to produce school leavers capable of a meaningful contribution to rapid economic development.

The co-operative movement in Zimbabwe is an attempt to provide opportunities for adults as well as school leavers with a constituted legal organisation that can borrow money from financial institutions.

For the last five years Zimbabwe has been addressing itself to social, economic, political and cultural environments in so far as they relate to education. At present new political comprehensive plans are under way in the process of vocationalising Curriculum. This cannot be discussed now because they are in the planning stages. Many of our sister countries have tried various schemes in an attempt to make the school Curriculum 'relevant'. In practice making the school curriculum relevant, meant the introduction of agricultural work in the school in order to give the education system a greater rural bias. This in turn was intended to encourage pupils to embrace agriculture increase the development of rural areas, and reduce urban migration. Many countries in Africa such as Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Upper Volta, Benin, Uganda and Botswana embarked on various ruralisation of education projects.

As a result of these efforts to make the school more relevant by introducing a more rural productive element in the curriculum proved problematic. In general terms, several criticims can be made although they do not apply to all projects.

(1) Lack of clear defination on the role education is expected to play in national development.

(2) Failure to identify local environment factors likely to affect the project such as power base within the Community.

(3) Lack of co-ordination between the projects and other ministries involved in development.

(4) The methods of teaching used in schools and the unsupportive out of school environment the school leavers find themselves in.

8/...

(5) Lack of mass or community participation in these projects - often projects are aimed at the community and not with the community.

(6) Lack of perception of the community's value of education i.e. their view of an educated student.

(7) Lack of knowledge of pupils aspirations.

(8) Lack of knowledge of how the political leaders in the area can influence positively or negatively the direction of a project.

(9) Lack of clarity in the objectives of the project lead to failure on the part of the implements to identify the necessary inputs during the life time of the project.

(10) Lack of contextual input and process evaluation. Most of the donor funded projects have product and impact evaluation done. It is important that such projects should have inbuilt evaluation.

The school as a basis of national development

The school should create an environment that enables students to acquire ability to innovate, act independently and develop positive attitudes towards practical subjects for the utilization of the skills acquired. In Zimbabwe we are trying to make the school a foundation of critical thinking and decision making. We see the need for teachers and students to develop the ability to transform local desires into specific policy which the community should accept as their own. This is done through the concept of education with production where the school together with the local community identify their needs and then suggesting practical solutions to solve the problems. In a way we encourage that the school becomes an intergral part of the community, so that together they can regard any problem as a challenge.

The gulf that existed between schools and the masses should disappear. The community should find that schools meet some of their needs. To succeed in vocationalising education the community's influence on education should be intensified by means of closer ties between schools and the community and economic activities. The main task of our education is to improve methods of teaching by fostering the intellectual and cultural levels of young people, together with their social consciousness, their understanding of the objective laws and interrelationships governing socialist development. Education as a

Education as a whole should inspire love of knowledge and interest in technical production matters. The relationship between school and factory, farm and co-operatives should be demonstrated effectively so as to take advantage of the educational effect of experiencing the successful fulfilment of the production plans and workers' involvement in planning and running their co-operatives.

Education for National Transformation

Lenin clearly identified that knowledge can only be truly attained in man's relation to his environment especially his labour with the emphasis on practice. It becomes for a man not only to know the world but to change it. This can be possible if our education focuses right from the start on relevant product knowledge. Knowledge which is useful, meaningful and productive in the sense that it will enable theindividual to use the knowledge and skills acquired to solve problems that face the individual and the nation at large.

In Zimbabwe we see education as a force for social change and that it should play a liberating role in instilling goals of co-operative behaviour patterns, stressing vocational skills and knowledge which will enable students to develop socialist ideals. Knowledge lies in the investigation of things hence knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the completion of knowledge (CHA HSI WANG TANG).

Parents will appreciate education with production if we effectively bring the school to the social, economic and cultural realities of the community. When science experiements of water and sand filter do not end in the laboratory but are introduced in the home using earthen pots to filter drinking water, when lessons on balanced diet encourage students and to eat locally produced balanced food and investigate on the ingredients and food value of all the food they eat at primary school level, then we are on the right path of vocationalising curriculum. Vocationalising education should not be limited to practical subjects alone. The concept of vocationalising education should enable students to have a comprehensive picture of society and the production process which requires co-operative relationships involving students, parents, farmers, industrialists, miners and politicians for the mobilisation of the masses. We see the successful development of the nation's talents depending

on making students understand the interaction and interdependence of every member of the community playing their respective productive roles. RIght from the beginning our schools aim to initiate the students into the social, economic and cultural web of the community and the nation correct orientation will make students organise sponsored walk. The rural community will not understand people who want to be paid for walking when the rural community walks every day for long distances without being paid for it.

In conclusion , we have learnt that inroducing practical subjects inschools without carefully integrating them with the social and economic ervironment of the country is self-defeating in that this type of approach unrooted the young people from the rural environment by setting high aspirations for better prospect in urban environment. The school leavers found themselves unable to get any form of employment because they had not been given any relevart skills to work in industry. On the other hand they hand classified themselves as unsuitable to leave in rural areas.

To avoid similar mistakes, our curriculum aims to provide children with knowledge of people's roles and relations with each other and with components of their environment, living and non- living so as to help them towards a more realistic approach to the understanding and appreciation of today's problems: Today pupils are expected to a problem as a challenge in terms of other related issues, situations and circumstances. To that end , the curriculum identifies labour (physcical, intellectual skilled or unskilled) as the greatest source of human wealth and therefore the cornerstone of national growth and development. We aim to produce a nation of workers who respect and appreciate other worker's contributions and feel that they have national obligation to contribute to national development. People who ask what they can do for Zimbabwe and not what Zimbabwe can do for them. We are in the process of identifying the crucial inputs and appropriate strategies to ensure a high degree of success.

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